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A GUIDE TO IMPLEMENTING THE RECEPTIVE MODE




A GUIDE TO IMPLEMENTING
THE RECEPTIVE MODE

by

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PRODUCED BY

Division Of Interpretation
National Park Service
U. S. Department of the Interior
1976



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Introduction

Most visitors are looking for something in the parks but do not really know what that is. As I indicate in my video-taped talk, it is likely that they want and need more balance in their lives; they have spent too much time in the action mode as an exclusive way of living. But because they do not understand the problem, they will try to obtain satisfaction in the parks using the way they have always used, even though that way--the action mode--excludes them from the very experience they need. For this reason, they need to be shown how to do things differently. At the same time, the visitor will need some explanation so that the receptive mode "makes sense" and does not seem foreign. The background material, developmental psychology, and research that I have included in the seminar and in this supplement, is something that you can use for this purpose. Draw upon it as needed for a given situation and also to clarify the concept for yourself. The receptive mode is a straightforward psychological phenomenon and need not be mysterious or beyond the capacity of the normal person. If you understand this yourself, it will not be difficult for you to give that same perspective to the visitor. Remember, there are two objectives to be fulfilled: 1) for the visitor to have the unique, satisfying, restorative experience that the parks can provide, 2) for the visitor to learn how to have a similar experience in his or her everyday life at home, in the natural urban settings where he or she lives, and where the possibility for receptive mode enrichment is always present.

It is important to remember that because each individual has somewhat different backgrounds, expectations, fears, strengths and capacities, there will never be a uniformly positive (or negative) response to your presentation of this material. What you do is not going to benefit everyone, and the receptive mode experience will not please or be meaningful for everyone. That is something you may find useful to say to those who are disappointed or feel left out when others tell of positive and exciting experiences. People differ and those differences are important. Therefore, you should not expect that you will be able to "reach" everyone in the group you are addressing. It is more a matter of creating an opportunity for those who are ready to take advantage of it--opportunities they are not likely to encounter anywhere else.

The Psychology of the Visitor

The psychological situation of each visitor will be somewhat different, depending on their age, the context of their visit to the parks (whether with family, friends, or alone), the atmosphere of the park site, and other conditions. However, certain basic tendencies are likely to be present. To begin with, if the visitor comes to an interpretive talk, a nature walk, or some other activity, they are likely to be in what is termed a "dependency" situation. They look to you, the interpreter, for parental functions: providing guidance, protection, entertainment, giving something to them. There is nothing bad about that--we all need the chance to shift roles periodically, and have the experience of being cared for, of placing responsibility in someone else's hands. Such a dependency situation permits a kind of relaxation that is otherwise not possible. With that orientation, the visitor will unconsciously invest you with more power, authority, and wisdom than you are likely to feel you have yourself.

In this way, you may experience each visitor's characteristic attitude towards authority figures. Some might expect you to be sternly judging; others might look to you for praise or reward; others might be very wary, expecting some intrusion on their freedom. Still others may give you the feeling that they want to crawl into your lap and stay there forever. Truculence, flirtatiousness, deference, childishness--you've undoubtedly encountered all these attitudes, or you will before long. Basically, however, the visitor's attitudes towards you will tend to be positive and they will be quite ready to follow your suggestions. They will appreciate your being an authority figure who, at the same time, allows personal interaction, rather than someone who is distant and forbidding. It is possible to be warm and friendly without relinquishing your responsibility or your role as a guide.

A second important facet of the visitors' psychological situation is that they are in unfamiliar surroundings without the structure of their work role and customary routines. The novelty of being away from home, the nonordinary characteristics of the situation, encourages the desire to experiment, to try new things and at the same time is a potential source of anxiety. The old patterns that are temporarily set aside may have been a burden and a constriction, but they were familiar and reliable. However, with the interpreter available to provide a feeling of protection, visitors will find it possible to experiment in ways that they could not do alone.

Introducing the Visitor to the Receptive Mode

How then, do you go about introducing the visitor to the receptive mode? Basically, this question will be answered through your own experience of the receptive mode. By drawing on your own experience, you will find the words that are natural and meaningful for you. It is the communication of your experience and discoveries to the visitor that will make the exchange alive. For example, you may have experienced a feeling of relief when you "quit." That sense of relief was your experience and your discovery; it can be the basis of your talking to the visitor. Or, the receptive mode might have given you a different experience of a pine tree, a feeling that you were not looking at it--it was looking at you. Such an experience might lead you to tell a visitor that the park has something to say to him or her without their making any effort to receive it. On the other hand, you may have found that the most difficult thing for you to overcome has been the nagging feeling that it is wasteful to spend time not doing anything. Or you might have been bothered by the concern that once you really "stopped," you would not want to start again. However, having "quit" several times, you realize that these fears and concerns are groundless. Accordingly, when you speak from your own experience about such problems or phenomena, the visitor will feel your sincerity and your communication will be natural.

This applies to myself, as well. My video-taped talk and my scientific research papers are all based on personal experience and that permits me to speak in a way that has the best chance of being understood. The same will be true for you. Thus, there is no prescribed presentation to memorize--or to worry about forgetting. Each time you talk to the visitor about the receptive mode, you'll be talking from where you are at that moment in your life, in that day, in that place. You don't have to worry about anything in particular that you need to say--just talk to the visitor about what you would like to be able to share with him or her.

I'll give you an example of how I might talk to a visitor or a group to introduce them to the receptive mode. This would be my way. Some of it might fit naturally with your style, too; but, inevitably, the way that is right for you would have its own form, would be in your own words and with your own personal flavor. That way, you will feel at ease and the visitor will, too. So, read what follows as an example, only. Then see what comes from you in the actual situation. Remember, there is no way to fail because there is no way to do this perfectly.

Let's assume that I am addressing a group of visitors who are traveling by car and sightseeing in a national park--one with forests. Initially, I might have given them a talk supplying information about the particular park and terrain in which they find themselves. Then, in conjunction with the talk, I would walk with them; moving them away from the meeting area, away from cars into some area that offers more privacy--an undisturbed setting, if possible. Then I might say, "There is a lot to learn about the park, but we've found that there are two kinds of learning. One is the kind you've been taught in school: listening to the facts that someone gives you and understanding them--such as the facts I've just given you about this park. But there is another way, too, equally important that we often don't have a chance to do. It's what you learn when you stop being so active with your mind and relax so that your surroundings, the place that you are in, can communicate to you."

"I don't know about yourself, but I usually come to work all wound up with what I have to do, worrying about getting someplace on time, thinking of a hundred details. I notice a lot of visitors come to the parks the same way and I think it's a gyp for all of us. Suppose we say that for the next 10 or 15 minutes we are all going to quit. After all, no matter what our problems might actually be, we really don't have to do anything about them in the next 10 or 15 minutes. We could take that time just for ourselves and stop making any effort, any straining of any kind--just receive. Wouldn't that be nice? I sure like it when I get the chance to do that."

"One of the reasons I like giving these talks is that it gives me a chance to stop, also. So, in a few moments, what I'm going to suggest that you do is just find some comfortable place to sit down and see if you can take a real vacation. You know, the very thoughts that we have are trying to get us to do some kind of work. When I examine my thoughts, I find that I usually am trying to solve some problem--either something that occurred awhile back, or something that is going to happen in the future. Even if I'm not thinking, my body may be trying to get me to work by telling me to move or scratch or some other thing and I'm always obeying those kinds of orders. But, this time, let's refuse to obey any of those orders. If a thought comes up, we'll just ignore it and let it go its way. If there's a funny feeling in your leg--to heck with it. Let's be real selfish; let's just sit there and see what the world is like for us when we don't do anything."

Let's really quit from working but let's not go to sleep. It almost seems as if we've been taught that if we aren't busy--busy inside our heads--we should go to sleep. That's a gyp.

"Let's quit for a little while, but not go to sleep, and let's have the experience of just being for ourselves, whatever it is. You don't have to close your eyes, you don't have to look solemn--there's nothing solemn about it. Take a vacation for 10 to 15 minutes and don't even worry about remembering it.

"Just take the next 10 or 15 minutes for yourself and see what that experience of the trees, or the flowers, or anything is like when you're not doing anything at all. In fact, you don't even have to enjoy it because sometimes we put that burden on ourselves, too. Let's just be wide open and quit, quit all our activity and see what the park, in this spot and in this time, is saying to us. If you want to look at one thing, such as a tree, that's OK. If you want to look at nothing in particular, just letting your eyes go out of focus--that's OK, too. It's for you. Find out what it's like to quit and stay awake."

Suppose, instead, I was addressing a group of campers. I might adopt the same talk with a somewhat different introduction, such as this: "Well, I see you've been camping here. How long has that been? How many people have been here one day? Three days? Five days? In all that time, have you ever quit? I mean stopped working inside your head, as well as outside. Do you know what I mean? A lot of people look at me and say, 'Wouldn't it be great to be a park interpreter, just wander around enjoying the scenery!' But, you know, a lot of the time I'm as much in my head as you might be, back in your job. I find it's really hard to stop all that busyness, even in the midst of these parks and, unless I do, I miss out on something.

"I think what we might try and do today is to see if we can get in touch with a way of being in the parks that's different from what we usually do. I mean, let's try and be lazy, really lazy. So lazy that we don't move even if our toe itches, so lazy that we don't move even if our back feels stiff, so lazy that we don't obey all those thoughts that want to get us to worry about what we are going to have for lunch, or how many days of vacation are left, or where the kids are, or your friends--or anything like that, 'cause each of those thoughts is trying to get us concerned about something, trying to make us figure something out, do some kind of work inside our head. Let's see if we can get so lazy that we just let all that stuff go by--

no matter what comes up. So lazy, in fact, that we don't even go to sleep 'cause we're going to be lazy and selfish and we want to know what it's like, how we experience the world when we don't do anything but stay awake to enjoy it. In fact, if enjoying it feels like another burden, don't even try to enjoy it. Just see what it's like. What is it like for us when we sit here in the park, with the trees around us and the sky and the earth? What can they give to us, if we stop doing things, if we just quit for 10 or 15 minutes?

"I don't know about you but I rarely have a chance to do it, except during talks like this and it's really something special, something really different--at least it is for me. Whatever it is, it will be your experience. Let's try it. I'll keep track of the time--so you don't even have to worry about that, and I promise I won't leave you sitting out here forever. Let's just sit here and see if we can take the next 10 or 15 minutes for ourselves, for us. Let's see what it is like to be here when we really quit wide awake-- but not doing anything."

To put people at ease and to involve them in what you are doing, you may find it helpful to pause during your description of the receptive mode, or after giving instructions, and ask them if they understand what you mean. You might ask whether they have had any experiences of their own that relate to it; whether they can recognize what you are talking about from their own experience--such as the trouble you yourself have in stopping thoughts from going through your head, or the sense of frustration in not being able to really relax, or the wish for something you can't quite name.

Usually, the first time someone tries, it's such a new experience that they can only get into it in a limited way. Therefore, if possible, it would be a good idea with any group to do it a second time, perhaps after an interval of answering questions or some discussion. The second time around people will usually get into it much more. You could try it, at that time, for something like 20 minutes. If they are on a walk, you might encourage them not to talk to each other after they finish the second quitting exercise--but to just get up and follow silently with you as you walk along. In this way, the succeeding walking period may be one in which they are able to continue the receptive mode--and you might explicitly suggest that. That would help get across the idea that one doesn't necessarily have to be sitting in order to have the benefits of that mode of experiencing.

The Time-Limited Approach.

Sometimes the interpretive situation, or limitations of time, make it inappropriate for the sort of approach described above. In such cases, you need not make any explanation or introduction but could suggest that the visitors take a moment or two to sense, feel or listen to their surroundings. For example, suppose you are showing a small group a room in a historical building. After giving the facts about the room and whatever background information might be appropriate, you could say, "Now let's stop for a moment and see if we can get a feeling for what the room conveys to us. Just relax. Don't do anything but just stay open and see what your senses can tell you about this place. What does it say to us if we relax and listen? So let's quiet down for a moment so that we can take in the room through all our senses." Another approach might be: "Now, instead of thinking about this room or looking at it, let's imagine that the room has its own life and it has something to convey to you, a message for you, as it were. It may be different for each person, but a message is there. So let's relax and just be very still for a few moments and see what you can sense of what the life of this room is and what it has to say."

You might then encourage the visitors to try that same procedure with other aspects of the area that they are visiting. Similarly, in a natural setting, the same format can be used.

Because you understand the process and the nature of the visitor's problem, you will be able to come up with ways of introducing the visitor to the experience in terms that are comfortable to you and appropriate to the situation--whether it be a 2-hour walk or 5 minutes; a seashore, a mountain, or an historic mansion.

COMPARISON OF MODES

| <u>Action Mode</u> | <u>Receptive Mode</u> |
|--|--|
| 1) To act on the environment | 1) To take in the environment |
| 2) Self is prominent in awareness, distinct from objects and environment | 2) Self is absent from awareness, "merges" with environment or objects |
| 3) Focal attention | 3) Diffuse attention |
| 4) Sharp perceptual, cognitive boundaries | 4) Blurred perceptual, cognitive boundaries |
| 5) Logical thought | 5) Paralogical thought |
| 6) Language for communication | 6) Art/music for communication |
| 7) Linear time | 7) Timelessness |
| 8) Formal dominates sensual | 8) Sensual dominates formal |
| 9) Past-Future | 9) Now |
| 10) Anxiety | 10) Satisfaction |
| 11) Muscle tension | 11) Muscle relaxation |
| 12) Sympathetic system | 12) Parasympathetic system |
| 13) More beta; less alpha | 13) More alpha, theta; less beta |

Helpful Techniques

1) Campfires

It is interesting to consider a longtime favorite activity in the national parks: the campfire gathering. At its best, the campfire brings together the visitor with the nighttime and the open fire. These are basic and deep-rooted elements that evoke feelings and perceptions often ignored during the course of our lives. The campfire at night is attractive to almost everyone, particularly if it offers something beyond listening to a park ranger lecture. The campfire can be a wonderful setting for letting go of striving, for just being alert and relaxed, without effort, taking in the night, the fire, and the presence of the quiet, surrounding group.

Unfortunately, many campfire scenes in the parks are filled with talking from start to finish, fulfilling only a social/educational function so that there is actually very little space for the night to enter--except in brief pauses between songs, stories, a formal interpretive talk, and the like. Stories and songs are fine, but cessation of speech and human noise, letting go of effort of any kind can create conditions for a different sort of experience, one that for many people will be a totally new one. It requires its own time. Perhaps 20 minutes, twice in one evening, could be set aside for just stopping and being. The last session could be done just before the campfire ends; the group could be encouraged to leave silently when the 20 minutes is over, enjoying and savoring their receptivity as they go slowly and quietly back to their camp. If this is presented as a positive and potentially rich experience, the visitor may appreciate the walk from campfire to camp as something other than a hurried transition from one place to another.

2) Physical Fatigue

Physical fatigue is a powerful ally in establishing the receptive mode. On long hikes, there is often much chatter at the beginning, but after awhile, as people begin to tire, talking ceases. Over the course of a hike, the natural world seeps in. During periods of rest, the hiker is often more open and in the present than at other times. At such moments, the receptive mode instructions will appear both natural and meaningful; the hike will have cleansed the usual tension and preoccupations from the visitor's mind.

3) Other Senses

Because we tend to orient ourselves almost exclusively through the use of our eyes, having a visitor experience a particular setting with his eyes closed can often be a valuable way to acquaint them with the world of immediate sensation. To walk slowly through a meadow or forest, guiding yourself only with touch, sound and smell, can be a revelation for many people. This is because suspending the visual sense tends to enhance all the others. Such an exercise could be a useful prelude to "quitting," as it makes perfectly clear how much of the world is accessible by routes other than that of sharp, focused vision. Also, the information entering through touch, smell and natural sounds tends to be less conditioned to thoughts than that of vision. Thus, when those avenues become central, there is a good chance that the visitor will have an experience of the world which seems new, fresh and vivid.

4) Breathing

Sometimes it can be useful, for a brief period, to have the visitors become aware of their breathing. You might suggest that they see if they can allow their breathing to become free and easy--and to relax at the same time. Tension tends to restrict our breathing. We tighten our stomach muscles and our chests, or we may accelerate our breathing to make it rapid and shallow. But deep, slow respirations are associated with relaxation, with the taking-in function of the receptive mode. Having people focus on the sensations set up by deep and slow breathing can quiet them in cases where the group may seem to be nervous or hyperactive. Even with a fairly relaxed group, you may find such a procedure to be a useful preparation for the receptive mode.

5) Your Own Experience

Remember that the basic technique for teaching the receptive mode to visitors is the use of the interpreter's own "receptivity." That is, your own experience of the receptive mode will serve to guide you and will provide an example for the visitor. Your own confidence in and enjoyment of the receptive mode will be indirectly communicated to the visitor and he or she will grasp that it is both possible and desirable. By expressing your understanding and appreciation of receptivity in your own terms, informed by your own experience, you will be most effective in aiding the visitor in having his or her own enriching experience of the parks.

Understanding the Visitor's Resistance

Not only is there a lack of information or instruction about the receptive mode but most people, despite themselves, will consciously or unconsciously tend to resist "not doing" at least to some extent. For some, the resistance may be very strong and they will not get into the receptive mode at all. Anyone who has practiced "quitting" can understand most of those resistances, fears or concerns. Some of the principal ones are as follows:

1) "Not doing" seems bad (lazy, idle, sinful). Even if the person is on vacation, to actually stop doing things may make them uneasy or guilty. This reaction can be diminished by conveying the idea that not-doing is important and can be viewed as a biologic need, something that has a useful function in itself.

2) Fear that once a person stops, he or she might never be able (or want) to become active again. In part, this is due to the way we drive ourselves, compulsively making ourselves do what we "should." Something inside of us rebels against this pressure and gives rise to the suspicion that if you didn't "have to" do anything you would just lie around all day and rot. Thus, giving oneself permission to stop may feel like giving in to the inner rebelliousness that we assume is what we really want. This reaction reflects a cultural assumption that our natural tendencies, instincts or drives are to be distrusted, part of our bad animal nature which requires taming, control, direction and coercion. For some people, the receptive mode may feel like opening the door of the cage in which they have kept and keep controlled all their various inner impulses of which they are afraid.

3) "Not doing" is associated in our minds with helplessness, and helplessness has links to basic anxiety going back to days of infancy and childhood. Pain or traumas associated with being helpless may be stirred up to some extent by something that feels like a giving up of control. This reaction is lessened by the presence of the interpreter who implicitly signifies safety and parental protection. At still deeper levels, letting go and letting whatever happens happen--the basic attitude of the receptive mode--is the equivalent of letting time flow by, allowing change. Change has connotations of loss and death. One of the ways in which we fight our fear of death is by using our minds to control our experience. Not only does the receptive mode put the experience back in charge, but in the receptive mode the consciousness of self diminishes.

Indeed, the "forgetting" of the self is the key to the benefits that the receptive mode provides. We want that experience and yet may be afraid that it could go too far or last too long.

For most people, it is unlikely that these factors will be that important or will emerge so strongly as to prevent them from getting a taste of the receptive mode experience, particularly when they participate in an exercise such as I have demonstrated. However, those for whom such concerns are quite strong will tend to be conscious of why they are having trouble getting into the receptive mode or why they can't seem to stop thinking. The best way to deal with such situations is to reassure them that not everyone experiences things in the same way, that the process does take time and whatever anyone experiences is fine. Actual explanations of why people may find it difficult should be phrased simply and with discretion. If you can empathize with a person's difficulties from your own experience, you will be able to say the right thing when it is needed. In most cases, no explanation is called for, just reassurance and a relaxed attitude.

Most of the resistance to going into the receptive mode originates from the customary orientation in the action mode. Once a person has shifted to the receptive mode, the frame of reference is changed and the experience is positive and relatively free from anxiety. If the interpreter personally practices the "quitting" exercise, he or she will become familiar with those internal things that tend to resist the process. Such personal resistances can provide insight into the way we have conducted our lives, the assumptions behind those rules of conduct, and the way towards increased personal freedom.

Because we have a tendency to think in terms of either-or choices, it may be important to emphasize more than once that what we're talking about is a balance, a restoring to the individual of a function that does not replace the action mode, but supplements it or is complementary to it. The principle of "complementarity" originated in physics. Scientists have found that, depending upon the conditions of an experiment, the results may indicate two different and logically incompatible views of reality. For example, some experiments showed that light behaved as if it were a wave, others indicated that light must be a particle. Rather than treat the two views as a contradiction and try to disprove one or the other, Neils Bohr, a physicist, realized that both aspects were legitimate expressions of reality, depending on the conditions of observation. Similarly, the action mode and the

receptive mode are complementary to each other; they do not co-exist simultaneously but one can be selected according to what is needed. One does not invalidate the other. Our culture has taught us to actively and consciously master our world and ourselves. This is a most important and necessary function. The receptive mode feels like a loss of that control, but it is really an activity of a different kind, for a different purpose, to meet different needs.

Typical Questions and Problems

The composition of groups will vary but certain questions are likely to come over and over again. Problems may also be presented. The following is a series of hypothetical questions and problems and some examples of ways to respond to them.

Problem: "My eyes go out of focus."

Reply: "That's OK, either way, just stay aware of whatever your experience is and enjoy not doing anything. Seeing things out of focus is probably interesting in itself, so just let it happen and see what that's like. On the other hand, if you want to keep things in focus, you can do that, too. Suit yourself, just don't strain or work--but let things come to you."

Problem: "I couldn't seem to stop thinking."

Reply: "It certainly is hard, isn't it? It just goes to show how much we've been trained to go on thinking even when we don't have to. I have found that it helps to remind myself that thinking is a kind of work; I then see if I can relax further and quit that kind of effort. I just sort of sag inside. So be patient and you'll have the chance to do it again. I think you'll find that the second time you try it, you'll be able to do it a little better."

Question: "I feel strange--is that OK?"

Reply: "Sure, this can't hurt you. It's really just a matter of resting while staying alert. Sometimes, something feels 'strange' when it's just very unfamiliar. For example, when we let a part of our body relax that we usually keep tense, it can feel 'strange.' However, remember that you're free to stop any time you want. So, if you get uncomfortable in some way that bothers you, just stop. The whole thing is really under your control and it's for you. Don't be afraid to stop or to start again--depending on how you feel."

Problem: "I don't want to do it."

Reply: "That's OK, you don't have to. This is just an experiment to try a new way of experiencing things and most people find it interesting to try. There is nothing you have to do or accomplish. Whatever happens is fine--but if you still don't want to try it, that's OK. You can just sit and think about anything that you want to, if that's what seems best to you."

Question: "I hear a high-pitched sound--did you hear it? Is it OK?"

Reply: "No, I didn't. But everyone has their own experience--that's the really nice thing about this. It's a question of each person finding out what his own experience really is and enjoying it. Just let it happen, and see what that's like--as if you're just curious to see what the world is like when you don't make any effort, when you're just there experiencing it. Most people find the experience tends to change, and that's interesting, too. So don't worry about it --just see what kind of show the world puts on for you."

Problem: "I fell asleep."

Reply: "That can happen, can't it? As I said, we've been conditioned to either be hard at work or to go to sleep and at any time we stop working, our eyes start to close automatically. But that's a gyp, you don't have to go to sleep just because you're not doing anything, because you quit. So stay awake. Be curious. Be a little bit selfish, like 'Hey, this time it's for me. I don't want to go to sleep, I want to enjoy it.'

Problem: "I go off into daydreams without realizing it."

Reply: "Yeah, me too. Almost everyone does that --but as soon as you become aware that that's what happened, just relax a little further and come back to your experience. Don't get upset about it, you didn't do anything wrong--it's

just the way our minds typically work. When you find you've been daydreaming, just come back to your experience and enjoy it."

Problem: "I feel so tense, edgy--I can't get with it."

Reply: "Yeah, I know what you mean. Next time we (you) do it, why don't you see if there are places in your body where you can relax further, where you can just let go and sag some more. But if you can't, that's OK, we all have periods when we get too tight. But try it anyway. You may be able to do it for short periods and it will feel good."

Question: "Is this the same as meditation?"

Reply: "Well, the term meditation covers such a wide variety of things that almost anything could be considered a kind of meditation. But this isn't meditation in any formal sense, such as yoga, TM, or anything like that. This is a basic way of just relaxing or quieting down and letting things come to you. Most meditations do try to encourage that kind of attitude. However, what we're talking about is so simple and basic that it probably shouldn't be called meditation in the way people usually use that term."

- OR -

Question: "Is it the same as TM? Yoga? Zen?"

Reply: "For all those things you use the basic attitude of letting go and letting whatever happens happen, instead of trying to control everything and straining. So it sort of shares that attitude with TM and Yoga and Zen, but it isn't the same as those things. It isn't that complicated or formal. You're not saying a mantra for example, and you don't have to sit with your legs crossed--nothing like that. So, it isn't the same as TM or Zen but it has things in common with them."

Question: "Should the Park Service be teaching us Eastern religions like this?"

Reply: "I think the problem is that you probably associate this to what you've read about meditation, and you associate meditation to Eastern religions. But don't worry, this is not a religion, or even part of a religion, or anything like that at all. What we're doing isn't a religion of any kind-- it's practicing a basic capacity that we all have that we tend to forget about and not use. Babies and children probably do it pretty well. It's just that most of us adults have been working so hard in one particular way that we've lost the ability that we originally had, and that we need. For example, if you want to remember a name that you've forgotten, you stop straining to remember, right? You say, 'It will come to me in a minute.' You're doing it then, you're 'quitting' to allow your mind to do something that's only possible when you relax. Another example: when you get into a hot tub, you need to be able to relax to really enjoy it. Relaxing isn't a religion. Maybe it should be a religion, but it isn't. So it's the same thing here. It makes a lot of sense for the Park Service to teach people what they need to do in order to enjoy the parks--instead of just wandering around with your mind buzzing the way it usually does. Don't you agree? It's like being taught swimming. It isn't all that hard to do, the ability is there in everyone and, once you learn, you can really enjoy the water."

Question: "Can I do this at home? Where? How long? How often?"

Reply: "I hope you do do it at home; that's the great thing about it. It isn't just a matter of enjoying the parks while you're here; it's learning how to enjoy your world wherever you are-- especially at home. Whether it's the backyard, an art museum, the city at night, or a flower in a vase--this is a way to really enjoy it and be nourished by it, restored by it. Twenty minutes is often a good length of time, but you could do it for 10 minutes or half an hour, or whatever."

Usually, it takes 10 minutes or so to get into it - so something like 20 minutes gives you some time to really enjoy it. Do it as often as you like, or is practical. Most of the time you may need to be in the action mode, doing and striving-- but the time when you feel like receiving something, being given to--well, that's a good time to try it."

Question: "Is it OK for the kids to do it?"

Reply: "Sure, in fact they may be able to do it better than you and, in fact, they may be doing it on their own--just naturally."

Question: "Can I read about this some more, somewhere?"

Reply: "Well, the scientist who told us about it has written a book called "Personal Freedom: On Finding Your Way to the Real World."* His name is Arthur Deikman (D-E-I-K-M-A-N), M.D. In his book, he talks a lot about the action mode and the receptive mode, and how they can affect our lives."

* Grossman Publishers - a Division of the Viking Press, New York, 1976 (June)

Approaching Different Park Situations - For Example: Historical Sites

Not every park situation will be optimum for teaching this approach. But the receptive mode can have applicability anywhere. It's a matter of helping people to tune in to the intrinsic character of a special park area or site, its presence. For example, in a historical home, after the necessary information has been given to the visitors, you might have people direct their attention to a particular article of furniture, or a particular room - and make use of the receptive mode to have that piece of furniture or room "speak," allowing the flavor, the style and feeling of that particular time to manifest itself. (See "Time-Limited Approach," Page 7.) In the case of a battlefield, the receptive mode may not yield the experience of the battle, for the actual field or meadow is now something else. But whatever is there, it will be helpful for the visitors to experience it - perhaps after they have been given a talk or had a chance to read about what that site was some years ago. The receptive mode does not require any particular setting - it's a way of receiving, a way of having a non-conceptual experience of the environment. Use of the receptive mode will give the visitor a personal experience of the quality of his or her environment, its intrinsic uniqueness as the visitor encounters it, at that moment.

Mode Cues

- 1) In general, human speech tends to reinstitute the action mode. You may have noticed that after the quitting exercise, if you and others around you remained silent, the mode tended to persist, whereas as soon as you began talking and chatting, it disappeared. It is important to keep this in mind when visitors are given the experience of the receptive mode.
- 2) Machine noise of different kinds is associated so strongly with the world of the action mode that it serves as a conditioning cue. Likewise, radio and TV tend to disturb or block the establishment of the receptive mode. Those persons who bring radio or TV with them into the wilderness probably do so as a way of bringing their usual orientation there, too. Such stimuli fill time and are a distraction, preventing the person from experiencing the world in the receptive mode. As mentioned earlier, this is a matter both of habit and fear of the unfamiliar.
- 3) Information or other signs tend to reinforce the action mode when they a) urge consumption, b) emphasize time, c) stress danger, or d) urge action. These are goals and functions for which the action mode was developed and it is to be expected that they would call forth a matching psychological and physiological response.
- 4) Manmade garbage, plastic wrappers, tin cans, and bottles are similarly associated with the action mode-world and are like intrusive visual noise.
- 5) Buildings made out of aluminum steel and plastic with sharp, straight lines and angles, and with reflective surfaces have a similarly disturbing effect. This is due not only to the use of synthetic, "unnatural" materials, but to the special character of manmade objects. In nature, nothing develops, grows or exists that is independent of its surroundings - straight lines are rare. A tree grows in accordance with the pattern in its cells and according to the environmental conditions that exist during different phases of its growth. Thus, trees growing during a period of drought will grow differently than if they were having abundant rainfall. However, when man puts up a building, the blueprints determine the form and it doesn't matter what takes place in the environment during the process of the building. Straight lines stay straight. The lack of interaction creates a definite effect so that we perceive the usual building as not blending in, not "fitting." In addition,

plastics and metals do not exist as such in the natural world and they stand in our minds for the world of the action mode. However, it is possible to use materials and to design forms in such a way as to encourage the shift to the receptive mode. This is the special challenge for architects and designers in the National Park Service.

6) On the positive side, the national parks are extremely valuable because they contain an abundance of cues and opportunities for instituting and enhancing the receptive mode. For example, in the parks it is possible to experience the night. Whereas in cities, smog, street lights and neon signs obscure the stars, in the national parks the nighttime sky blazes down with stars that most visitors have never seen in that quantity and intensity. Also, in the cities, the fear of violence leads people to shun the out-of-doors at night. Although the nighttime world of forests or deserts may still hold some anxiety, after sitting quietly for a period of time, the visitor begins to experience the nighttime as a special kingdom containing riches and beauty.

7) In the national parks there is the opportunity for that increasingly rare experience: silence. Silence from the noise of automobiles, radios, TV, machines can be a strange and incredibly delicious experience. To sit and listen as intensely as one can and hear only the music of the natural sounds- wind, birds, running water - that can be a peak experience to the visitor to the parks. Such sounds convey no concepts; they convey quality, a feeling, a presence - communication channels suitable for the receptive mode.

8) Along with silence is the possibility of solitude, of being by oneself in the midst of a living powerful world. It is one thing to be alone in an urban environment alien to our biologic selves; it is another thing to be alone amidst a living forest, a desert, or on an ocean shore. Aloneness under natural and positive conditions enhances the receptive mode. In contrast, when engaged in social interaction with others, a thousand psychological reflexes are touched off, dealing with protection, survival, acquisition and security. When we are alone in the natural world, it can speak to us of our biologic home and the possibility for a new and positive experience of aloneness arises.

9) The odors of the natural world are seldom appreciated. Odors are powerfully evocative and communicate in their own way. When we experience odors, it is like experiencing music; a type of a

perception that is timeless and spaceless enters our consciousness through the oldest part of our brain. The smog-free air of the national park permits the experience of the realm of aromas, subtle, rich, provocative, and unfamiliar. They represent an unconditioned world and can be an exciting discovery for a visitor in the receptive mode.

10) Perhaps most important, experiencing the natural parks is to experience the presence of the mountains, streams, deserts, oceans - those entities that speak to us powerfully and directly given the least chance to do so. The effect of that presence further enhances the process of receptivity. Having absorbed a small amount of what emanates from the natural world, the visitor is better able to return to that mode again.

Benefits to the Visitor, the National Park Service and the Nation

The Visitor

The visitor can be restored by the parks. He or she can be rested and reconnected to the real world instead of scurrying endlessly in the abstract realm of thinking and planning, of anxiety and depression, of too much concern with the past and with the future. The dissatisfaction and restlessness that can be noticed in many visitors can be markedly reduced, if not eliminated, for a time. This becomes possible if the visitors know how to do it, learn to go about getting what they really want and need. Not only can the visitors learn to get what they need in the national parks, they can learn a way of getting what they need from their home environment also. This is the most important goal of all.

Having experienced the natural and cultural world as something that gives to you, preservation and ecological concepts become matters of self-interest, rather than issues of virtue or morality. Thus, the visitor becomes motivated to enhance a resource that actually meets his or her needs. Therefore, it is important to emphasize to the visitor: 1) the receptive mode is a natural, inherent function which has been forgotten in our education and fallen into disuse; 2) it is rewarding and necessary to our well-being; 3) the receptive mode needs to be practiced until it becomes familiar as part of the person's daily experience; 4) the receptive mode helps us to enjoy our normal world wherever we may be living. It can make us independent of elaborate satisfactions because it permits us to be satisfied and restored by the everyday world.

The National Park Service

The need for elaborate programs to "satisfy" the visitor can be lessened by facilitating the receptive mode experience of the parks. The park setting - the mountains, the deserts, beaches, ruins, memorials - can do the job. The National Park Service provides the opportunity but the power is in the park itself, not in lectures or talks no matter how well-conducted. Perhaps the old term "guide" is closer to this function of the Park Service than the term "interpreter." When the visitor experiences the park environment directly, no interpretation is needed or called for. Most trails are well-marked now, but the psychological path to being receptive to the mountains or deserts needs a guide more than ever.

If this function is fulfilled, the visitor to the park will leave knowing the importance to him or her of our natural unspoiled resources and will be an energetic ally in preserving, extending and enhancing the parks.

The Nation

We are in a crisis, looking for firm ground under our feet. Words seem to have lost their meaning, their usefulness as a guide. It appears that a sense of connection and purpose needs to be experienced to have real meaning. Having had such experience in the parks, a person has a new option, a way that he or she can use to help find satisfaction and harmony on "space ship earth." We came from the ocean and the land; our biological survival and growth requires re-establishing our connection to our source so that we can have the strength and wisdom to establish the future that should be ours. The national parks can be schools for refinding our place in the world.

A Caution

The interpreter is not a guru and the quitting exercise is not a path to salvation. Rather, you will be encouraging visitors to rediscover a skill that can be very useful to them for certain purposes, at certain times. The value of the receptive mode does not at the same time mean that the normal way of functioning of the visitor is without value or is of less importance.

Enthusiasm and conviction is important in any teaching situation and is important for interacting with park visitors. However, missionary zeal is neither necessary nor helpful. A relaxed, positive, permissive attitude is best suited to allowing people to set aside their usual concerns and allow the parks to affect them. Too much zeal can turn recreation into another task. The parks are there to provide true enjoyment; what you can do is to show the visitor a way to make that possible. Make no promises beyond that, but help the visitor to create the opportunity he or she may need.

Need for the Interpreter to Practice the Receptive Mode

"Quitting" is good for the visitor; it is good for the interpreter, also. After all, you probably are working for the Park Service because you instinctively turn to the world of the parks for the same reasons that many of the visitors come there. You, too, need to be restored, to continually re-establish your

direct connection with trees and streams and sand dunes. Be selfish; give yourself time each day to have your own experience of the park, to let it speak to you, to give to you what you also need. It needn't be a task for you anymore than for the visitor. Rather, it should be a vacation, a period of recreation and satisfaction. You can't do it perfectly; your thoughts will continue and distractions will occur - but it doesn't matter. There will be spaces of time when the connection occurs and that's quite enough. I would suggest you take 15 to 20 minutes in the morning right after getting up. Take a walk out somewhere and quit for a while. You don't even have to sit down, although that may make it easier; it is the attitude that is important. Do the same thing whenever you are feeling harried, "uptight," or notice that you are hungry for distractions of any kind - food, reading, radios - whatever. That kind of hunger is often a sign that you're disconnected.

Enjoy it all; don't wait for the summer season to be over. If you can receive what the parks offer, there will be no problem about helping the visitor to do the same.

APPENDIX

Research Findings Supporting the Bimodal Hypothesis

Apart from its application to the issue of the visitor's experience of the national parks, the bimodal model offers a way of understanding a number of interesting research findings.¹ Its usefulness in organizing and clarifying poorly understood phenomena offers indirect support for its validity. Some examples follow.

Otto Poetzl, in 1917, observed a difference in what happens to visual stimuli that are perceived in the margin of awareness as compared with those perceived in the center.² He found that a stimulus that is incidental, on the periphery, is "processed" differently than one that is central. In the first case a dreamlike style is used; whereas in the second case, rational logic is employed. These phenomena can be understood as functions of the action and receptive modes. Sharp focused vision is needed and used for object manipulation where a softer more diffused vision (such as represented at the periphery of awareness) is employed for maximum intake. Thus, stimuli in the center of awareness are subject to a mode of organization associated with the manipulation of objects--the action mode. The thinking is based on object logic. Stimuli at the edge of awareness are processed according to a sensually oriented, intake goal of the receptive mode, which uses paralogical strategies.

Julian Silverman and his colleagues have noted changes in the style of thought and attention of schizophrenic patients who have lengthy hospitalizations.³ When patients stay for three years or more in confinement, they distinguish objects less sharply and there is diminished "scanning" of the field. Similar results were found in prison inmates, so these findings are not likely to be due to chemical deficits or "deterioration." The bimodal model does suggest, however, a way of understanding the change. A decrease in the articulation or definition of the visual field means that an object is less sharply differentiated from the background field and diminished scanning means that fewer objects have awareness centered on them--perception is spread out and diffuse (receptive mode). In contrast, where field articulation is sharp and scanning is wide, a person is prepared to detect and manipulate objects, to actively engage the environment. However, the action mode is specifically defeated by the usual

hospital environment. If the patient must stay in such an environment several years, the frustration of active striving would be expected to result in a shift away from the action mode towards the receptive.

Mercedes Gaffron studied the differences in a person's experience when he or she focused on the near or the far side of an object.⁴ Specifically, when attention was focused on the near side of an object ("grasping"), the object was perceived "exteriorly" -- the dominant qualities of the experience were form, surface, distance and separateness from the observer. However, when attention was focused on the far side of an object ("mere looking") the experience featured "proprioceptive" qualities of volume, weight and "interior" feelings of tension and movement. In that situation, the object seemed to expand or intrude into the boundaries of the observer. (You can check this out for yourself by stopping for a moment and looking at a nearby object in these two ways).

These different experiences can be understood if we consider the process of eating a pear. In reaching for the pear, we focus on the near side, in preparation for grasping it. As the pear is brought towards the mouth, our focus shifts to the far side and beyond. In the act of eating, the pear is located within the zone of sharp visual focus, too close to be sharply defined, and is being literally taken into our organism. The grasping of the pear is associated with the receptive. The linking of visual focus and body activity that took place during our development persists even though the objects involved may on other occasions not be ones that can be eaten. The shifts in vision which accompany this process are integral parts of the change in mode so that a shift of visual activity may also be accompanied by a shift in other dimensions of that mode, for example, muscle relaxation and stimulation of the parasympathetic (digestive) system.

David Shapiro has studied the way in which an individual pays attention to stimuli--his attentive style.⁵ He found that the style has important effects on his conscious experience. Shapiro distinguished between two principal styles: sharply focused attention (obsessive compulsive and paranoid styles) and diffuseness of attention, with absence of sharp focus (hysterical styles). He concluded, "The most conspicuous characteristic of the obsessive compulsive's attention is its intense sharp focus. These people are not vague in their attention, they concentrate and particularly do they concentrate on detail...(they) seem unable to allow their attention simply

to wander or passively permit it to be captured. Thus, they rarely seem to get hunches, they are rarely struck or surprised by anything." The consequence of such a pervasive style of attention is that: "He will often miss those aspects of a situation that give it its flavor or impact: thus, these people often seem quite insensitive to the 'tone' of social situations." "Certain kinds of subjective experiences, affect experiences, particularly require, by their nature, an abandonment or at least a relaxation of the attitude of deliberateness and where such relaxation is impossible, as in the obsessive compulsive style, those areas of psychological life tend to shrink."

Shapiro's conclusions support the hypothesis of two modes of organizing experience. In the case of the obsessive compulsive person, his thought and style is in the service of object manipulation, an activity at which he is usually quite successful. However, hunches or moments of inspiration that come about involuntarily in a creative state, or moments of a mystical revelation, are quite absent from the experience of persons rigidly committed to the object mode of cognition and experience. Likewise, rich emotional experience is not found with that mode because "abandonment" and "relaxation of the attitude of deliberateness" is not compatible with the action mode. However, in what Shapiro terms "the diffuse hysterical style," we see the counterpart to the receptive, sensory mode. Such persons are less efficient in manipulating objects and tasks of that order, while sensory details, inspiration and emotion figure prominently.

The increasing use of biofeedback techniques to produce muscle relaxation as well as the more traditional European treatment technique of autogenic training (self-suggestive relaxation) has shown that deep levels of muscle relaxation are often associated with changes in the person's experience of their body boundaries.^[6/7] Similar changes in body boundaries have been noted under conditions of sensory isolation and in the induction phase of hypnosis. These findings can be understood if we identify fluid boundaries (diminished self-object differentiation) and muscle relaxation as components of the receptive mode, and if we consider that the components tend to vary as an organized group when a shift in mode takes place. Autogenic training, sensory isolation and hypnosis all tend towards the taking-in of the environment rather than acting on it. Thus, they all favor the receptive mode. Although they are also attempting to influence muscle tension and sensory input directly, the shift in mode may be due just as much to the accompanying shift in the functional orientation of the subject.

This reasoning also suggests an explanation for those situations where anxiety is reduced as a consequence of muscle relaxation; for example, biofeedback training or massage. Insofar as anxiety is an affect linked to future action (e.g., "If I perform this destructive or forbidden act, I will be destroyed"), the shift to the receptive mode could be expected to decrease anxiety because the state of receptivity is not organized for action. As far as the time dimension is concerned, the action mode is the Future while the receptive mode is the Now.

Finally, recent studies of differences in functioning of the two halves of the brain has shown functional differences that in some respects parallel the action and receptive modes. According to David Galin, the left hemisphere, that which usually controls the right hand, appears specialized for a particular cognitive style --an analytic logical mode employing words as the basic tool.⁸ The right hemisphere, which ordinarily controls the left hand, functions with a wholistic, gestalt mode that is particularly suited for spatial relations. While the left hemisphere's analytic style employs a linear processing system, the right hemisphere appears to integrate many inputs simultaneously, rather than dealing with them one at a time, in sequence. Both modes have important functions and, ideally, both modes are used by an individual depending on the situation in which he finds himself. Studies employing EEG measures have shown that lawyers and artists have differences in left and right side functioning, as predicted from the functional studies.

Although the brain model does not perfectly fit the action and receptive modes, the parallels are striking. In both cases, it can be said that the individual will function optimally if he or she has the capacity for employing whichever mode is most appropriate to the situation.

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